HEALTH IMPACT

Globally, close to 2.4 million deaths could be prevented each year if people practiced good hygiene and had access to adequate sanitation and water. The majority of these deaths are among children in developing countries who suffer from diarrhea, pneumonia, or are affected by undernutrition. Almost one billion people lack access to safe water, and about 2.6 billion people do not have improved sanitation facilities. Further, despite evidence that soap is available in most households globally, handwashing with soap at key times is not commonly practiced.

MAKING MARKETS WORK FOR THE POOR

PSI’s mission in water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) is to improve the health of low-income households in the developing world through increased access to and use of WASH products and services, such as household water treatment, latrines and soap.

PSI uses two approaches based on private sector techniques - social marketing and social franchising - to encourage the adoption of healthy behaviors and to make markets work for the poor. PSI applies its expertise in social marketing and social franchising to:

- change behaviors and strengthen supply chains
- improve the capacity of providers to deliver affordable, equitable and quality services

PSI works with the private and public sector to leverage the expertise and resources of each to maximize health impact. The private sector is a powerful way to reach low-income households, especially as they consume products and services every day that have been accessed through private providers and channels. PSI engages with actors at multiple levels in the private sector to identify opportunities to develop viable business models that better respond to consumer needs and preferences through strengthened supply and demand.

PSI also works in close collaboration with the public sector, including in-country governments and international donors and policy makers, to fund start-up projects, coordinate efforts to change key WASH behaviors, and to ensure that those who have less ability to pay are able to access products and services.

At the center of PSI’s interventions are its consumers. PSI uses formative research to identify products and services that consumers want and need as well as their opportunity, ability and motivation to adopt new behaviors. These insights are used to develop marketing strategies that promote behavior change and ensure products and services are appropriately priced, promoted and placed in target countries. PSI also gathers insights from private sector partners to develop business models that serve as a framework for how a provider creates and delivers value for a consumer and the financial incentives for adopting a re-defined model.

PSI RESPONDS

PSI has promoted household water treatment for more than a decade and currently has programs in 30 countries. To date, PSI has averted almost 30 million cases of diarrhea and sold enough water treatment products to treat more than 1 billion liters of water. In recognition of the different transmission routes that fecal-oral infections can follow, PSI launched a more comprehensive WASH strategy in 2011 and currently has handwashing programs in four countries and sanitation programs in five countries. This work is further supported by PSI’s global network of experts in social marketing and franchising who are addressing public health needs in reproductive health, malaria and child survival in more 60 countries in the developing world.

WATER QUALITY
To improve the quality of drinking water in the home, PSI promotes the use of effective and easy-to-use household water treatment products. Sales and distribution strategies are devised that position safe water products so they are available when and where people need them, for example, at local shops, kiosks and markets and via community-based sales agents. Marketing campaigns promote correct and consistent use of products, taking into account what drives product uptake and any barriers to use. PSI also distributes household water treatment to people living with HIV/AIDS who are at higher risk for diarrhea though peer groups, clinics and in basic care packages. PSI is exploring the possibility of applying its expertise in franchising to water kiosks in the future; collaborating with providers to establish viable businesses that provide high quality water to households.

SANITATION
PSI is working with private providers to develop business models that make investment in sanitation attractive to households and investment in sanitation businesses attractive to the private sector. Business models address four critical elements: 1) Access – Increasing the number of providers and services offered 2) Equity – Serving all population groups, including finance mechanisms that ensure access for the poorest 3) Quality – Improving the pre-existing level of quality and 4) Demand – Increasing demand for offered products and services. Sanitation products and services offered by providers include: input materials for constructing latrines, construction services, the collection and disposal of waste, and pay-for-use latrines in urban slums.

HANDWASHING WITH SOAP
Understanding the key triggers for handwashing with soap is critical to changing this behavior. PSI designs its marketing campaigns using consumer insights and a variety of communication channels, including mass media, schools and interpersonal communications to get the message out. In schools PSI uses the classroom as a medium for establishing handwashing habits among children with fun and age-appropriate communication materials such as comic books, games and drawing contests. Materials and messages are also crafted for primary caregivers and new mothers who have an important role to play in reducing the transmission of infections to young children through the practice of handwashing with soap.